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National Report

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30-Year Commemoration In Dallas and Arlington

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ARLINGTON, Va., Nov. 22 — On the 30th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's death, thousands of tourists filed past his grave at Arlington National Cemetery today, and the plaza in Dallas where he was shot to death was declared a National Historic Landmark.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, the former President's only surviving brother, arrived at the grave shortly after 3 P.M. with Representative Joseph P. Kennedy 2d and their wives. They each laid a white rose at the foot of the tombstone, knelt, crossed themselves and appeared to pray silently before the eternal flame for about two minutes. Then they walked around a bend to the grave of Robert F. Kennedy, Joseph's father, and prayed briefly there.

They were apparently the only family members to visit the grave. Family members said long ago that they preferred to commemorate Kennedy's birthday, May 29, rather than the date of his death.

Ceremony in Dallas

In downtown Dallas, Nellie Connally, the widow of former Gov. John B. Connally of Texas, unveiled a bronze plaque designating Dealey Plaza, where Kennedy was shot, a historic landmark. The Connallys were riding in the open limousine with Kennedy and his wife when the President was shot. Mr. Connally was wounded.

"Thirty years ago," Mrs. Connally said, "fate brought me here as an unwilling player in the most unforgettable tragic drama of our time. Now, three decades later, we are gathered not to look back with grief, but to look forward with hope."

Mr. Connally died last June.

In Dublin, Jean Kennedy Smith, the former President's sister, who is now the United States Ambassador to Ireland, led a memorial Mass that was attended by about 1,500 people, including Prime Minister Albert Reynolds.

At the cemetery here, dozens of wreaths and bouquets were placed next to the Kennedy grave, as were several letters and poems on lined paper from schoolchildren. The largest wreath — green, orange and white carnations — was left by the members of the John F. Kennedy Division No. 3 of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

A member of the group, Matt Ryan from Annandale, Va., said he often came to the cemetery to honor Kennedy on St. Patrick's Day and on major

anniversaries of the assassination.

Thirty years ago today, said Mr. Ryan, now 72, he was running a lunchette in Riverhead, L.I. "This really brings back memories," he said.

Others, like Lisa Markle of Washington County, Md., and Les Manzer of Gainesville, Ga., made special trips here from out of town. Elena Bonafonte-Vidotto and Stanley Botts said they were at the grave for the first time even though they have lived for years across the Potomac in Washington.

Mr. Botts, who visited during his lunch hour, said, "I can remember some of the things he was about. I was 16. I don't recall any people who have had that much influence on me."

Among the early visitors today were Evelyn Lincoln, Kennedy's personal secretary, and President Kim Young Sam of South Korea, who was in Washington for a meeting with President Clinton on Tuesday.

Still, the crowd was never so large that visitors could not walk right up to the grave. Susan Fazakerley, a spokeswoman for the Army who was assigned to the site for the day, said the number of tourists today was only slightly larger than what might have been expected on a sunny autumn weekday.

A Day 'Much Like Today'

At the ceremony in Dallas, Judge Barefoot Sanders, who was the United States Attorney in Dallas at the time of the assassination, recalled the day 30 years ago. Before the shooting, "it was a day very much like today: pleasant, much sunshine, good cheer," Judge Sanders told the several thousand people gathered at the plaza.

"It's just a rush of memories that all of a sudden transports you back to the emotions of that day, which were overwhelming," the Federal district judge said. Kennedy, he continued, "symbolized what could be, the belief that problems could be solved."

President Clinton, who has often said that Kennedy was his idol, intended to take no public notice of the anniversary. But at a news conference, he was asked whether he thought Kennedy was killed by a single assassin and whether he was satisfied with his own security arrangements.

The President replied: "I'm satisfied with the finding that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. I am also very satisfied with the work done by the Secret Service in my behalf."



On the 30th anniversary of the slaying of John F. Kennedy, a ceremony was held at Dealey Plaza in Dallas to dedicate the assassination as a National Historic Landmark. With the Texas Book Depository in the background, Police Officer Art